

URBAN/MUNICIPAL

CA3 ON HW 058

97D23

DEAFCO

**“Getting the Facts
to Make Deaf Business Work!”**

Social Planning & Research Council

SPRC
of Hamilton-Wentworth

255 West Avenue North, Hamilton, Ontario L8L 5C8

tel: (905) 522-1148 • fax: (905) 522-9124



A United Way Member Agency



DEAFCO

**“Getting the Facts
to Make Deaf Business Work!”**

May 1997

by

Irene Nizerro, Researcher
and
Susan West, M.A. (Social Welfare Policy)
Social Planner

on behalf of the DEAFCO Committee

Prepared for:
Canadian Hearing Society, Hamilton Region
and
Human Resources Development Canada

PRICE \$8.00

SOCIAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH COUNCIL OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH
255 West Avenue North, Hamilton, ON L8L 5C8



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Hamilton Public Library

<https://archive.org/details/deafcogettingfac00unse>

● THE SOCIAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH COUNCIL
OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH

255 West Avenue North
Hamilton, Ontario
L8L 5C8

All rights reserved including the right to
reproduce in whole or in part of any form.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The DEAFCO Advisory Committee wishes to thank all of the sponsors and contributors who made this program a success, most notably Human Resources Development Canada, without whom this project would not have been possible. The resources of the Canadian Hearing Society, Hamilton Region, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth, and the Business Advisory Centre were also invaluable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	(i)
TABLE OF CONTENTS	(ii)
1.0 BACKGROUND	1
2.0 THE PROJECT	3
3.0 PERSONNEL	5
4.0 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT	6
5.0 PREPARATION FOR THE TRAINING SESSIONS	7
5.1 "Take-One" - Business Training Orientation Workshop	7
5.2 Two-Week Training Program	8
6.0 OBSERVATIONS	9
6.1 General Observations	9
6.2 Observations During the Training Course	9
7.0 FUTURE DIRECTIONS	12

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Profile of DEAFCO Advisory Committee

Appendix 2 - Workshop Flyer

Appendix 3 - Hamilton Spectator Article

1.0 BACKGROUND

Over the past three years, the DEAFCO Committee has worked to promote business ventures to overcome employment barriers faced by people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Efforts began with assistance from the Canadian Hearing Society, Hamilton Region (CHS) to explore community economic development ventures in 1994. By organizing a community forum, CHS was able to bring together thirty individuals to discuss these opportunities for employment. These individuals chose the name DEAFCO, by combining the words "DEAF" and "CO"mpany. This name also reflected the community's interest in supporting those individuals who might pursue becoming independent business owners.

During the summer of 1994, a researcher was hired by CHS to gather information on possible business models to be explored by DEAFCO. Continuing meetings drew people from Toronto, Kitchener, Burlington, Niagara Region and Hamilton-Wentworth. All voiced their concerns about the need for the deaf community to get involved in community economic development. Based on this information and support, DEAFCO, through the CHS applied for a grant to examine the feasibility of business ventures for the deaf and hard of hearing community.

Funding received from Jobs Ontario Community Action (JOCA) Fund enabled DEAFCO, through the Canadian Hearing Society, to undertake a one year community feasibility study. A call for proposals was launched in February, 1995 and the contract was awarded to the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth (SPRC).

This study¹ involved an environmental scan of funding opportunities, existing supports, and available research on deaf business. A community development worker was hired to conduct interviews, research existing deaf businesses and conduct community outreach.

The results of this study showed that although there was some interest within the deaf community to start businesses, there were few who considered it possible to take the risk. The primary reason cited, according to in-person and questionnaire responses, was a general lack of

¹ Copies of the report entitled "DEAFCO Community Economic Development Study" 1996 are available from the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth.

awareness of how to access information about starting businesses and the following tasks involved in operation. The study also revealed that although opportunities existed for Deaf adults to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, the training programs and resources required modification to meet the specific communication and cultural needs of the Deaf community.

The Community Economic Feasibility Study recommended that the concept of a deaf business network, modelled on one found in the United States be set up. This central network would provide training and foster local small business ventures be feasible and useful to assist in overcoming deaf and hard of hearing barriers.

Based on this recommendation, the SPRC and CHS, on behalf of DEAFCO, applied for a grant from Human Resources Development Canada. This grant became known as "DEAFCO: Getting the Facts to Make Deaf Business Work".

2.0 THE PROJECT

In March, 1996, DEAFCO received \$24,950 from the Federal government. Again the SPRC was contracted by the Canadian Hearing Society, Hamilton Region to undertake the work of this project.

This funding opportunity enabled three part time workers to be hired. Their tasks were to conduct outreach to the deaf community and work with the Business Advisory Centre's Entrepreneurial Program to develop and offer small business courses. Their focus was to work with the existing resources and individuals who presently offered entrepreneurial training to modify their programs to meet the unique needs of the deaf and hard of hearing population. This was to ensure that there would be minimal duplication of services.

At the time of the application, the following objectives were proposed to be completed within one year:

- providing incentives to the deaf community to become aware of their own potential to successfully start and manage small businesses;
- provide access to equipment for the duration of the project;
- develop course materials that focus on overcoming the barriers to small business start up;
- enrol up to 20 members of the deaf community in a course on starting a small business, subsidized by the project;
- create greater awareness, interest, and involvement from the deaf community in the Hamilton-Wentworth and surrounding area in economic development activities;
- expand on the number of contacts between DEAFCO and the business community , that would aid in fostering a sustainable network of deaf entrepreneurs;

- foster informal partnerships between DEAFCO, the BAC, the SPRC, CHS, and the Self-Help Centre of H-W;
- train two workers from the deaf community to assist or offer small business courses;
- create a focus to ensure DEAFCO committee members' optimistic commitment to continue working to reduce economic barriers to the deaf community.

Due to the established reputation and success rate of the Business Advisory Centre (BAC), located in Flamborough, it was determined that this organization could be the cornerstone of key training opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing adults. An informal partnership between the Business Advisory Centre and the DEAFCO Advisory Committee was struck. This process was facilitated by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth and the Canadian Hearing Society, Hamilton Region.

3.0 PERSONNEL

While awaiting funding from HRDC, several candidates were interviewed for the position of a Community Development Coordinator (see job description attached). This individual was to be responsible for coordinating the DEAFCO project, researching and tailoring existing course materials on small business start-up and the supervision of community development assistants.

Although every effort was made to hire a member from the deaf community, a hearing individual was hired. Being fluent in ASL, as an OIS interpreter, and completing a PhD. in deaf education, allowed Irene Nizerro to apply much expertise to this project.

With lessons learned from completing DEAFCO's feasibility study, the SPRC placed a greater emphasis on outreach activities being conducted prior to DEAFCO events. Much time, energy and travel was put into letting the community know about DEAFCO and hiring individuals who had strong outreach skills.

Rudy Lacis was hired as a community development assistant, as was Tamara Meyer. Both spent considerable time in promoting DEAFCO and spreading the word about the business courses to be offered in the fall.

Rudy also created and monitored a web-site for DEAFCO (<http://home.interlynx.net/~relacis/deafco.htm>) and many enquiries from all over the world about DEAFCO followed.

4.0 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT

As with the last DEAFCO initiative, the Feasibility Study, a group of eight volunteers made up the DEAFCO Advisory Committee that provided input and support to staff and DEAFCO activities. (See Appendix 1)

However, during the course of this project, there were varying levels of support from the DEAFCO advisory committee. At certain times, meeting attendance was low yet recognizing that volunteers are busy people, staff generally carried forward proposals and the hiring of DEAFCO staff, with advice sought by E-mail from committee members.

As the newly hired staff spread the word of the project and after the success of the initial workshop, the committee members became more committed to DEAFCO and sought more active roles in the project and its future directions. It appeared that a particular activity, such as a training course, allowed the group to coalesce and use their many strengths and assets. This information is particularly useful for the future of DEAFCO

At the beginning of this project, the DEAFCO Committee operated on a fairly loose structure, at their preference. However, to ensure their full independence members were asked to elect or volunteer to chair the committee as staff and consultative resources would be limited, or no longer be available after April 1, 1997.

Two volunteers, Chrissy Ehrlich and Werner Zahnleiter, have agreed to co-chair the DEAFCO Advisory meetings. Their responsibilities now include calling meetings, setting agendas, and seeking out future funding possibilities. Other members will take on roles of minute taking, website management, and outreach/education.

5.0 PREPARATION FOR THE TRAINING SESSIONS

Well in advance of the two week session, a brief in-service was provided to the staff of the Business Advisory Centre. A member of the Deaf community (not involved with DEAFCO), and the coordinator of the DEAFCO project made a joint presentation to the BAC staff about cultural and communication issues with Deaf people. The instructors who participated in the in-service expressed immediate appreciation for all they learned. Moreover, during the instructors' interactions with the Deaf participants throughout the two-week training, it became more apparent how helpful the Deaf Culture In-Service had been.

A member of the DEAFCO Advisory Committee also worked with one of the BAC staff to plan revisions to the written materials to be provided during the two-week entrepreneurial training program. Many hours were spent on the part of the Committee member, reviewing the materials and making suggestions for revisions. The suggestions were discussed with the BAC staff and revisions made to the materials making them more accessible to the deaf community. While this was a time-consuming and somewhat labour-intensive process for the BAC staff and a DEAFCO Committee member, it was a one-time preparation that would ensure easier accessibility to any future deaf participants in the entrepreneurial program.

Several hours were spent preparing materials and distributing them to the interpreters, as well as discussing with them the nature of the course and some of the content. In addition, each interpreter was responsible for becoming familiar with the materials to be covered on the day(s) she would be interpreting.

5.1 "Take One" - Business Training Orientation Workshop

In November, 1996, much community outreach was conducted to invite members of the deaf and hard of hearing community to an evening workshop at the Business Advisory Centre.

This meeting was well attended by 49 members of the deaf community from Hamilton and surrounding area. Staff from the BAC, as well as a Deaf entrepreneur gave short presentations on some general issues related to small business start-up and formation.

Feedback, collected in written form from the participants of this workshop was unanimously positive. All attendees were pleased to learn the information offered, and indicated an interest in pursuing entrepreneurship. A few were already running small businesses, while others were contemplating the idea for the future.

Comments included:

"...I think this is fantastic. Please offer again..."

"...Great presentation. I want to come to the two week training course that is being planned..."

"...Helped me find out if I could have my own business..."

The success of this workshop seemed due, in part, to the large amount of hours spent in conducting community outreach activities. Three project staff, including the project coordinator, worked on a part-time basis to contact the surrounding communities and local agencies to inform them of this unique workshop. This required utilizing networks found within the deaf community and even visiting social occasions and events that involved members of several communities. This effort was clearly rewarded by the strong attendance at the workshop.

From this workshop, several people indicated an interest in pursuing further training and were invited to go through normal intake procedures with the Business Advisory Centre. Intake procedures involved the applicant completing a questionnaire about their proposed plans for a business venture. The questionnaire was then discussed and assessed by a Business Advisory Centre staff member.

This resulted in the identification of 10 people who would go through the standard two-week intensive entrepreneurial training program, with its modifications for this group of students.

5.2 Two-Week Training Program

The two-week program ran at the Business Advisory Centre from March 10 to March 21, 1997. This covered many topics on starting up a small business, including marketing, advertising, selling, researching your product, networking and communication. The course ran from 9 am to 3 pm daily. This presented problems for those who could not get the time away from work, but every effort was made to be flexible as to the dates of the course.

6.0 OBSERVATIONS

6.1 General Observations

All parties involved felt that the project was a success. The participants in the two-week training session at the BAC expressed their pleasure at the depth of training and coverage of topics included in the two week training course. This is documented in the attached stories covered in the Hamilton Spectator. (See Appendix 3) The instructors, some of whom were initially uncertain about some of the dynamics of instructing a group of deaf participants, were unquestionably pleased with the success and smooth running of the two week course.

One issue that needs to be resolved relates to the cost of the training program using the model. The cost per trainee per session at the Business Advisory Centre can be prohibitive. In addition, the expense of three full-time interpreters, over a two-week period, makes this a costly proposition if subsidies are not available to trainees. Many deaf and hard of hearing participants could not afford this without subsidy - be it from the DEAFCO project or HRDC. It is unlikely that DEAFCO itself will be in a position to afford such subsidies over the long term. For this training to be successful, we need to find economically viable solutions to this potential barrier.

6.2 Observations During the Training Course

The DEAFCO Project Coordinator attended the two week training course for a few hours daily, to observe the flow of the class, provide support where possible, and ensure that evaluation activities were conducted. Almost daily there were issues to discuss with the participants, the instructors, or the interpreters.

The feedback received during the daily evaluations from participants were generally positive. The few concerns stated included:

- widely ranging levels of comprehension and prior knowledge of the business topics covered in the two week course among participants which made some individuals attention spans differ
- there was a perception of differing levels of motivation to pursue the course content (and not stray from the topics)

- the physical set-up of the room occasionally obscured the view of the interpreters and the other participants as they were making comments or asking questions. The long tables in a narrow room may not have been as effective as a room which was square but had a round table, or a V-shaped arrangement, with the instructor at the open end of the V.

The instructors' issues were slightly different:

- comments from the participants sometimes diverged from the topics at hand. While these were interesting, and sometimes informative (about other issues), they deterred from the content being covered for each day. Learning to monitor these comments effectively and sensitively was of concern to the instructors.
- the physical set-up of the room was occasionally difficult to arrange when visual materials were added to the presentation (i.e., videos, overheads).
- some topics did not lend themselves to interpretation as easily as others. In particular, topics which revolved around numbers and money (e.g., cash flow, pricing, accounts receivable, etc.) were a challenge to present in a smooth, cohesive manner. The solution appeared to lie in the use of an overhead projector connected to a laptop. This allowed easy and fast modification or addition of new information in a visual manner which the participants could follow simultaneously with the interpreters' rendition of the material.
- the typical "time lag" required by interpreters changed the dynamics of teaching, to some degree. One instructor noted that interjections of humour were met with different responses than she was used to, since the immediate laughter, smiles or other reactions were slower in coming from the participants, simply due to the dynamics of interpreted information. Furthermore, the time delay between a Deaf participant's question or comment and the actual voicing by the interpreter was something with which the instructors needed time to become familiar and comfortable.

Normally, two interpreters are required for assignments of two hours or more in duration. However, given that the nature and pace of the BAC Entrepreneurial Program, and the number of deaf students, it was recommended that three interpreters per day be hired. This worked well but meant additional costs to the project that were not anticipated.

Finally, feedback was also provided by the interpreters. The presence of the third interpreter ensured full access to the information being presented. Fatigue was less of an issue, since the improved ratio decreased chances that the interpreters would become less capable of processing the information effectively by the end of the day, as well as providing extra "coverage" in case something was missed or overlooked. It also helped ensure that the comments/questions from all of the deaf participants were covered.

7.0 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

During a recent strategic planning session, information about the project was received and several future initiatives were visioned by the DEAFCO Committee to continue the work that had been started, in relation to a deaf business network. The work of a full-day proposal writing workshop of the DEAFCO committee, facilitated by the Social Planning and Research Council, yielded the following forecasted activities:

Among the future activities forecasted by the DEAFCO are the following:

- a conference offering information on deaf business issues which will include Deaf business owners from across the country and possibly the United States
- annual Entrepreneurial Training Program courses, initially at the BAC with support from the DEAFCO Advisory Committee. Eventually these courses would be presented entirely by Deaf instructors, and modeled after the BAC's program.
- regular opportunities for networking among entrepreneurs and members of the deaf community who are considering entrepreneurship
- maintaining a Web Site and Home Page, so that others may come to learn of DEAFCO through the Internet
- explore other options for deaf businesses (i.e. collectives, team approaches) where several deaf people may come together to establish a business
- contacts with the business community will be fostered and developed to attempt to arrange in-kind mentoring and support for the Deaf entrepreneurs who have recently graduated, as well as others to come. To that end, the local post-secondary institutions have been contacted to arrange support from students in their Business courses.

Contact lists will be maintained upon conclusion of this project, which will consist of resource people in the community who may be able to provide support to the new Deaf Entrepreneurs, as well as those individuals from among the Deaf community who were interested in joining the program but for whom the timing was not right for the two week course, offered in March, 1997. Community development and outreach will continue to be a priority, to encourage the growth of the DEAFCO Advisory Committee, and to foster the

development of new ideas and initiatives that would best suit the Deaf community. The evening networking courses which the BAC offers once monthly will now be available to the DEAFCO participants. The interest is currently quite high among the recent graduates of the program, and it is anticipated that subsequent networking evenings will also help to maintain their interest and enthusiasm.

The DEAFCO Advisory Committee is highly motivated to see the two-week training course continue to be offered on a regular basis, with the ultimate goal of establishing an independently functioning body of deaf mentors and participants. The current costs of interpreting and other accommodation are seen as temporary measures to ensure the highest quality training of the first few groups of deaf entrepreneurs to be trained by the BAC. Ultimately, it is hoped that these entrepreneurs will become mentors to subsequent groups of trainees, and will provide the ongoing support which is typical of the dynamics within and among deaf communities throughout North America.

APPENDIX 1

Profile of DEAFCO Advisory Committee

- **Rick Barrows:** began work with the committee while employed by the Canadian Hearing Society in the Kitchener-Waterloo area and has continued to remain involved today. He also operates a small business and is interested in seeing small business spread in the deaf community.
- **Bruce Belcher:** began work with the DEAFCO Committee early on in the process and has continued to be active. Is currently coordinating the Deaf Empowerment Program - a literacy and life skills program for deaf individuals - at Mohawk College. Bruce is very active in the Burlington deaf community and at a provincial level as well.
- **Peter Cairns:** has been a member since early on in the process. A resident of Waterdown, and an employee of the E.C. Drury School in Milton, he also owns and operates his own small business.
- **Christine Ehrlich:** (Co-Chair) began work on DEAFCO during Feasibility Study when she was employed by SPRC as Community Outreach Officer. She is currently completing studies at York University in Deaf Education and is a very active member of the deaf community - both in Toronto and in a provincial level.
- **Robert Kendrick:** as Regional Director at the Canadian Hearing Society Hamilton Region, initiated DEAFCO through organizing original community forum on small businesses for deaf community in 1994. Has continued to be involved as supporter of project and member of committee since its inception.
- **Rudy Lacis:** began work with the DEAFCO committee in the past year and was employed on a short term contract by SPRC to help promote the training sessions. Employed full-time in the sign making industry, he has been a small business owner in the past and hopes to again in the future.
- **Tamara Meyer:** began learning ASL 8 years ago and through this became a volunteer at the Canadian Hearing Society, Hamilton Region as a fund raising committee member, a participant in the Deaf Buddy program, and participants in an ASL Club that meets twice a month. She completed a 7 week contract with SPRC and continues to sit as a volunteer on the committee.
- **Werner Zahnleiter:** (Co-Chair) has been an active committee member since its inception. He completed a placement at CHS Hamilton while in the CET management training program and has been Director of Ontario Interpreter Services of CHS for several years. He is an active member of the deaf community in Kitchener.

DEAFCO PRESENTS:

ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

TAKING MATTERS



INTO YOUR OWN HANDS

A workshop for deaf or hard of hearing people interested in starting a small business



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1996

6:30 pm to 9:30 pm

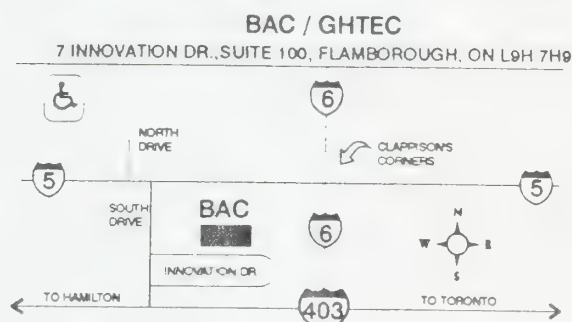
REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING 6:30 to 7:00 pm



at the Business Advisory Centre

LEARN HOW TO:

- ADVERTISE EFFECTIVELY
- GET A LOAN
- OVERCOME BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- USE THE INTERNET FOR MARKETING



Featuring JAMES ZELL

OWNER OF 'THE BALLOON ZELL'

Refreshments will be served  **Come and win door prizes!**



Enrollment is limited, reserve a space now!

For more information or to RSVP, please contact:

The Canadian Hearing Society, Hamilton Region (545-9931)
Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth (522-1148)
Susan West via e-mail at wests@netaccess.on.ca



The Spectator
April 15, 1997

Somebody's out there listening

Program lets deaf shape their business futures

Stories by JOHN BURMAN
The Spectator
HAMILTON

Chronic unemployment has dogged the Hamilton area's 45,000-member deaf and hard-of-hearing community for years.

Communications barriers, misunderstanding of prospective deaf employees' needs and an often-ingrained lack of self-esteem have combined to limit opportunities.

Many who do have work are underemployed.

Now, with the help of the Business Advisory Centre of Hamilton-Wentworth, entrepreneurship is being promoted within the community as an alternative to traditional, placement-oriented job-creation programs.

It's an end-run around the barriers the deaf face, a bid to create jobs by helping people open businesses.

The deaf were particularly hard-hit during the recession as companies downsized.

For them, the struggle to find another job was complicated by having to put a TTY (teleprinter) and Bell Canada Relay Service number on applications and then use sign language interpreters in interviews.

The very tools the deaf use to communicate with the rest of us became red flags to employers who mistakenly fear hiring a deaf person means the expense of hiring an interpreter all day every day.

A survey of the Hamilton-Wentworth Niagara deaf community by the Canadian Hearing Society several years ago suggested a high rate of unemployment in the community.

Almost 75 per cent of 500 people polled were on Family Benefits Allowance or welfare. Many who were working were underemployed.

But that is changing.

The first graduating class of 10 hearing-impaired entrepreneurs from the BAC's Clappi-

NEED TO KNOW

The Business Advisory Centre of Hamilton-Wentworth is a not-for-profit, community-based organization formed in 1977 to assist entrepreneurs.

The BAC's Self-Help Centre simplifies small business start-up by offering:

- Seminars and workshops on a variety of business topics;
- Free access to its library of resource materials about business start-up and government programs and services;
- No-charge consulting on business planning and start-up procedures (an appointment is recommended).

The BAC's program is based on the concept of business helping business.

The backbone of its operation is a resource pool of major companies in Hamilton-Wentworth that voluntarily provide, through the BAC, advice and counselling to small- and medium-sized businesses on technical and management problems.

Contact the BAC at 7 Innovation Drive, Suite 100, Flamborough L9H 7H9. Phone 689-2400 or visit the BAC's website at www.bac.net.

son's Corners centre has entered the market and community members and business advisors believe they will do well.

Providing business acumen for deaf entrepreneurs is one of a number of community self-development ideas DEAFCO has engendered.

DEAFCO — its acronym combines deaf and company — is a committee formed in 1994 under the guidance of the Canadian Hearing Society and the Hamilton Social Planning and Research Council to explore ways to provide jobs and training

LISTENING: Deaf are getting down to business

Continued from D1

Original seed money came from the now-defunct jobsOntario plan and then Human Resources Development Canada provided a \$25,000 grant to study entrepreneurial interest in the community, run a pilot seminar, attract participants and fund the first BAC session in March.

"Our feasibility study found there were more than 800 deaf-owned businesses connected in a network in the United States but no such network here," says Susan West, of the Social Planning Council.

Half-dozen

In fact, says West, there were only maybe a half-dozen deaf entrepreneurs in Hamilton-Wentworth when the study was done in 1996.

West was pleased when 50 people turned out for the introductory seminar in November and all but one was interested in getting into business.

Once a group of candidates was identified, they were given the BAC's standard self-assessment questionnaire and viability scrutiny.

Three sign interpreters were hired. Course material was simplified for language and visual quality. Classes began early in March, under the direction of BAC program supervisor Claude Blais.

"As far as we know, this is the first entrepreneurial training program for the deaf of its kind in Canada," said Blais. There is a similar program in Newfoundland, but it is for people with a variety of disabilities.

Blais and his people taught the new entrepreneurs communications, marketing, advertising, promotion, customer service, sales and cash flow in two weeks of intensive class time and loved every minute of it.

"I think they did 100 per cent better than our other classes because we sparked something in them that says they can do things themselves," says Blais.

"The BAC is proud to be a part of something that enriches the fabric of the business community."

BAC staff were surprised how smoothly the course ran and were pleased DEAFCO arranged for teacher Blair Bowman from the E.C. Drury School For The Deaf in Milton to come in beforehand to explain deaf community culture, needs and some non-sign communication.

Communicate

"We taught the class business," says Blais. "In turn, we learned how well you can communicate with body language, eye movement and gestures."

"They also taught us you can do whatever you want if you put your mind to it. Barriers are what you make them."

The first class included a professional mime, two women opening a stress management business, a sign painter, dress designer, furniture refinisher, janitorial service operator, landscaper, ceramic installer and a man setting up to sell his own designs of after-market items for pickup trucks.

BAC and DEAFCO plan continued support for the new entrepreneurs over the next year, with regular advisory

PLEASE CONTACT

To learn more about the deaf or deaf entrepreneurs, please contact:

- The Canadian Hearing Society, Hamilton Region: 2301 King Street E., Hamilton, L8K 1X6. 545-9931 voice or 545-3877 TTY. 545-0337 FAX.
- Visit the society's website on the Internet at www.chs.ca
- DEAFCO: Contact Susan West at the Social Planning and Research Council, 522-1148 voice or 522-0434 TTY or by email at west@netaccess.on.ca.
- Visit DEAFCO's home page at www.chs.ca and click on interesting Links then Deaf Resources and finally DEAFCO.
- The Business Advisory Centre of Hamilton-Wentworth: 7 Innovation Drive, Suite 100, Fiamborough, L9H 7H9, phone 689-2400. Or visit the BAC's website at www.bac.net

NEED TO KNOW

It is easy to telephone a deaf or hard-of-hearing person with a TTY or (teleprinter) hookup, designated by TTY with a phone number.

1. Phone the Bell Canada Relay Service at 1-800-855-0511.
2. An operator will ask for your number and the deaf person's number.
3. The operator will contact the deaf person via TTY. You talk to the operator. The operator relays your words and reads the deaf person's replies.
4. The operator will offer tips like using the words "Go Ahead" to signal the end of your sentences.
5. Relax. In moments you will get used to the rhythm and have a pleasant conversation.

ry help and monthly business networking meetings at the Social Planning Council's self-help centre at 255 West Avenue North at Barton Street East in Hamilton.

DEAFCO is also building a proposal to apply for more funding under new federal opportunities legislation unveiled in the last budget.

The committee wants to run more courses through BAC, help deaf people get access to the Internet, establish a deaf business network and set up a resource centre.

West says the Internet is an ideal communication system and marketplace for deaf businesses and would play a key role in a business network.

The network is needed to provide the entrepreneurs with the kind of support, mentoring and problem solving resources other businesses get through membership in groups and trade associations.

DEAFCO realizes many in the hearing impaired community do not have access to the Internet because of equipment cost and is working towards providing necessary equipment, she says.

The BAC has also made some of its own equipment available for access.

"A lot of people in the deaf community use the Internet now to communicate because it is a natural for them," says West.

"DEAFCO's Internet site has received many contacts from people all

over the world to share and get information and the technology will really help people in the community starting businesses."

The committee would also like to find some money to provide a program to get business people from the community to talk to deaf high school students to promote enterprise as a career choice.

"Young people in the community need to be told they can do these things and how they can do it," says West.

West and Irene Nizzero, hired to coordinate DEAFCO's efforts with the BAC, say the entrepreneur program is a valuable alternative to traditional job training and placement because it builds on participants' strengths.

Unrecognized skills

There is underemployment in the deaf community, says Nizzero, because the deaf do not get credit for their skills.

"Deaf people can't get a fair crack at their share of the jobs. We felt there was a lot of talent not being used."

"People are simply unaware deaf people are not limited in anything they can do except their hearing."

Nizzero says she, West and Blais have "complete faith these businesses are about to take off."

One thing that will help these entrepreneurs is the very tight social network already established in the deaf community, she says.

Because most members of the deaf community went to one of only three high schools in Ontario — including Milton's E.C. Drury — many people have known one another for years and there is a strong sports, social and cultural interaction.

"We are getting the word out on that network, letting people know there's entrepreneurial training being done and who these new businesses are."

Blais believes consumers will see these new business people are trying to accomplish something and will support them.

"Something inside me says people are going to give them a chance."

The Canadian Hearing Society, which serves both the deaf and the hard of hearing, has no accurate figures on the size of the hearing impaired community in this area, says Rob Kendrick, Hamilton region director.

Mixing it up

"Statistics Canada does not combine the two so we use a mixture of health and census figures to come up with about 45,000."

The society, which has lobbied for and worked to provide jobs for the community for years, has no figures on the number of deaf-owned businesses in Canada either, he says.

"We are aware of no more than a dozen in Ontario," says Kendrick.

Kendrick believes the BAC training will put the participants in a good position to start their own businesses.

Whether operated independently or in co-operation with several other people, these businesses will have a higher chance of success to provide secure employment because of the training, he says.



3 2022 17291784 7